

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace all currently pending claims with the following complete set of pending claims:

1. (currently amended) A refractory device for use in the teeming of molten metal, comprising a ceramic pouring tube element, supported by a metallic can, in which a ceramic support element is encapsulated and a shock-absorbing interface zone is located between said ceramic support element and the ceramic pouring tube element, in which zone there is provided a material the thermal properties of which are such that it is substantially solid at ambient temperatures but becomes deformable at elevated temperatures experienced during metal teeming, said shock-absorbing interface zone being isolated from molten metal poured through the ceramic pouring tube element, wherein the material selected for use in the interface zone is structurally solid at temperatures up to about 700° C and becomes deformable without any appreciable chemical degradation at temperatures above about 700° C.

Claim 2 (canceled).

3. (currently amended) A refractory device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the material providing the interface ~~zone~~ zone comprises a pyroplastic ceramic material.

4. (currently amended) A refractory device according to claim 1, wherein the interface ~~zone~~ zone comprises a ceramic paste or bonding agent or additional structural ceramic element.

5. (previously presented) A refractory device according to claim 3, wherein the pyroplastic material is a frittable composition applied over at least one co-operating assembly surfaces of the pouring tube element and the support element.

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6. (previously presented) A refractory device according to claim 1, wherein the ceramic support element is fully encapsulated within the metallic can, and fits with and around the upper part of the pouring tube element by virtue of said ceramic support element having an internal profile corresponding sufficiently to the external profile of the pouring tube.

7. (original) A refractory device according to claim 6, wherein the respective profiles are such as to provide corresponding interferences fits surfaces or otherwise matching.

Claims 8-9 (canceled).